No. 2259.23

THE TRUSTEES OF THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY
OMNIUM
LUX
CIVIUM
OF THE CITY OF
BOSTON
1852 · 1878

Boston Public Library

Do not write in this book or mark it with pen or pencil. Penalties for so doing are imposed by the Revised Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This book was issued to the borrower on the date last stamped below.

DEC 12	1	
JUL -8		
DEC 12	1	
AUG 11 1		
MAY 29	1	

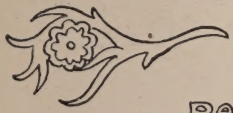
B.P.L. FORM NO. 609: 3,13,42: 552M.

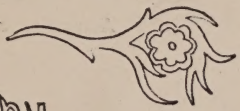
THE TOUCH OF NATURE

2259.23

THE TOUCH OF NATURE

Little Stories of Great Peoples





Retold by

Augustus Mendon Lord

with illustrations by

Edith Cleaves Barry

Boston
American Unitarian Association
1904

3874

Copyright 1904
American Unitarian Association

Published September, 1904

NOV 12 1904

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

To R. M. L.

My fellow traveller along many pleasant story-roads
that lead from land to land
across the world

PREFACE

NO one can lay claim to authorship in the following stories; they grew out of the common life of a people as the grass and the flowers grow out of the great vital elements of the earth; and so each of the stories, it seems to me, while it is shaped and colored by its own national and racial characteristics, reveals at heart the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.

The present collection is the outcome of a custom of telling stories at Christmas and Easter to a group of friends, young and old. In the search for suitable material, I was soon driven from all modern tales especially written for these occasions to the source of all the best stories in the world, — the old folk tales of the childhood of the peoples. I wanted to tell a story, not to read it, and these stories are of the kind that tell themselves, because originally and for many generations they were not written down, but passed

on by word of mouth, and they do not smell of the lamp.

In this attempt I find I have been working in line with an organized department of modern education devoted to the art of story-telling. In my own city the teachers of the public schools are required to tell stories to their pupils. I hope that the present volume may supply some good material for such use, as well as for the story-tellers of the home fireside, and may move its readers to independent research in the rich collections of national folk-lore.

I have drawn my stories from many sources, — English, French, and German collections and translations, and folk-lore periodicals, as well as from versions heard by me personally. The story of *The Winning of the Spurs* is a very free adaptation of "Roland Schildträger" in "Aachens Sagen und Legenden," Aachen, 1858, and the story of *Where Money is Plenty as Water* is a like version of the legend of Stavoren in "Rheinlands Wunderhorn," vol. 15, Leipzig, 1884.

I wish to express my gratitude to the librarians of Boston, Philadelphia, and Providence,

and to the librarian at Harvard University, who have assisted me in many ways, and to the artist who has shown such sympathetic insight in her interpretations of the stories to the eye.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Coming of the Water-Lily	3
The White Thorn of Glastonbury . .	11
In the Realm of Song there is no King	19
The Old Man who brought Withered Trees to Life	31
Where Money is Plenty as Water . .	41
The Knight of the Almond Branch . .	51
St. Patrick and the Druids	61
The Winning of the Spurs	69
The Chicory Girl of the Campagna . .	79
The Elfin Cow	93
How the Czar lost the Stag and found Himself	99
Homeland and Fairyland	113
The Black Horses of Canobie Lea . .	125
When the Old Gods wake	133

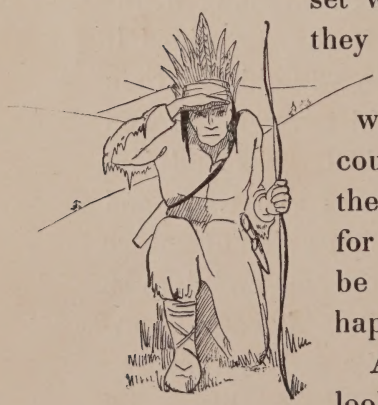
THE COMING OF THE WATER-LILY

AMERICAN INDIAN

THE COMING OF THE WATER-LILY

IT was in the days when no one but Indians lived in America. All the forests and rivers and lakes and mountains were theirs, and they loved the land, not only all that was grand and wonderful in it, but also the beauty in every flower that grew along the forest path, in the moss on the tree-trunks, in the birds and the squirrels and the tiny field-mice; and wherever they saw anything beautiful, out of their love for it they imagined it brought some message from a life higher than their own, a life that could never suffer and grow old and die. The old Greeks had just the same idea about streams and trees and flowers and birds, and the spirit side of nature they pictured in stories of nymphs and dryads. The northern peoples of the old world — ancestors of many of us, Celts and Germans — meant the same thing in their stories of gnomes and men of the mountain, fairies, and pixies.

Of course the forest was the most familiar dwelling-place of the Indians, because most of the land was forest. They lived in the shadow of the great trees day after day; they could journey hundreds of miles north or south, east or west, if they chose, without ever leaving the green light of the woods. But here and there were open spaces, glades and meadows, perhaps along some river-bank or lake-side, and they always liked to have their home near some such break in the forest. For every evening, so the old Ojibway legend tells us, at the hour of twilight, when the sunset was fading into the night, they used to come out of the forest and meet in some wide green field where they could see the sky and watch the stars come out one by one; for the stars they thought to be the dwellings of great and happy spirits.



And one night, as they sat looking silently up into the deep skies, they saw one star that they had never seen before, brighter than all the rest,

far away in the south above a mountain-peak. While the other stars moved across the sky as the night wore on, and sank behind the western hills, this star did not move, but shone on steadily, with a clear white light, like the light of the moon, just above the southern horizon, until it faded in the sunrise. Night after night they saw it; and at last four or five of the boldest warriors journeyed through the woods to the distant mountain and found that the star was indeed close to earth, just above the tops of the highest pine-trees it seemed to be, flooding the whole mountain-side with so bright a light that they could not gaze upon it long enough to discover further its shape and nature. The wise men of the tribe pondered what the coming of the star might mean, but could not satisfy themselves or others. They feared it was the portent of some great disaster, — war or famine or pestilence.

One morning, however, a young warrior came to these councillors and told them that the night before, in a dream, a great and beautiful spirit stood by his side and told him she was the spirit of the strange star.

"Young brave!" she said, "I have learned to love the land in which you live, — the forest and the flowers, the mountains and the prairies, the brooks and the ponds, — and still more to love the people that live in the land; and so I have left my sisters in the far-off sky and come to live with you. Ask your wise men where I can live and see the race I love every day, and what form I shall take to be most loved of them."

Many answers were suggested that the young brave should give to the spirit whenever she reappeared to him. But all for one reason or another were rejected. The painted cup was beautiful enough to be the home of any spirit, but it grew down by the brooks in the open meadows, where it was trodden by the feet of buffalo when they came to drink; the moccasin flower was too deep in the woods, and its flower was closed, it did not look men in the face; the dwarf azalea grew far up on the cliffs out of reach of the little

children whom the spirit loved above all besides.

Finally, the choice was left to the spirit herself, for no flower then known to these men, who knew every flower that bloomed, seemed quite to satisfy her need. And one night, as from above the mountain the white light of the star which was her garment was reflected in the waters of the lake at its base, a long line of light, breaking into myriads of little star-like flakes whenever the wind rippled the waters, the spirit saw where she must dwell. The next morning the lake was covered with thousands of white flowers.

So to the Indian, slipping swiftly through this white garden of the waters in his bark canoe, the water-lily is the symbol of the love of heaven toward the dwellers on earth and the assurance of its presence among us to the end of time.

THE WHITE THORN OF GLASTONBURY

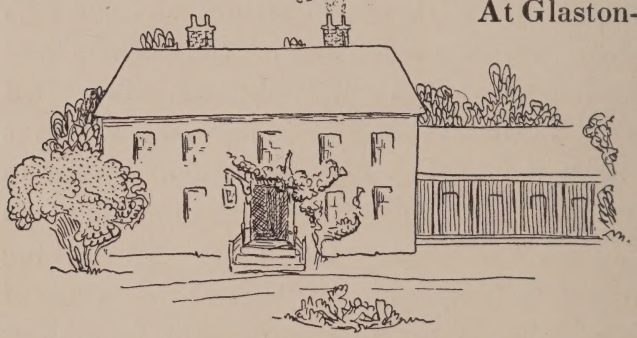
ENGLISH

THE WHITE THORN OF GLASTONBURY

AS the lily is the national flower of France, so the rose is the national flower of England, and as we associate the pine with New England history and scenery, so we associate the oak with the scenery and the history of Old England. Yet after all it is neither the trellised roses nor the oak groves that will first impress the foreign visitor in England as the prevailing characteristic of an English landscape. Rather it will be the hedges of holly and of hawthorn, often mixed in together, — the hawthorn, with its pink or white blossoms, in the spring, and the holly, with its glossy leaves, attractive at all seasons and its red berries lighting up the wintry roadside when the blossoms have long fallen from bush and tree.

The hedgerows of England, how beautiful they are! whether we see them close at hand, as we walk between them through some narrow country lane, or look down on them from some

hillside, and see them intersecting here and there, stretching away for miles across the green fields and soft rolling slopes to the misty horizon. This is my favorite memory of England; and so I was glad to find an old English legend which I could associate with that memory, — the legend of the Thorn Bush of Glastonbury. At Glaston-



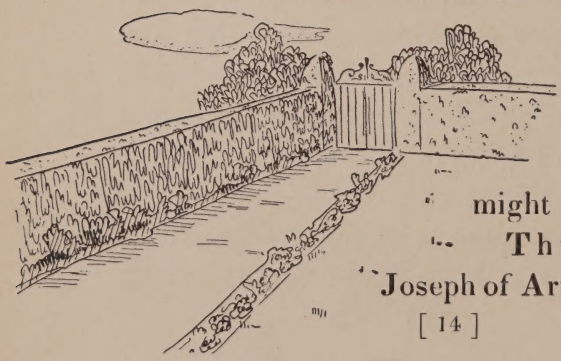
bury, in front of an old inn, there used to be a broad-spreading thorn bush with thick gnarled branches. It looked much older than any of the bushes in the neighboring hedge; and if all accounts were true, it was older even than it looked, — older than the inn itself, and that had been built three or four hundred years. Even the cedars of Lebanon, that the Crusaders brought from the Holy Land and

planted by Warwick Castle, were young compared with this famous thorn. Yet it was not its age that made it famous; it was its blossoming.

When all the other bushes were in full bloom in the bright spring weather, when in the golden summer the red roses hung thickly above the old inn door, not a sign of a flower did the old bush show. Its broad-spreading green foliage served as an excellent background for the gay and varied colors of the little roadside garden. If you were a chance traveller spending a day at the pleasant inn, you might well think that the bush had got through blossoming in its sober old age and all it was good for was to serve as a background for gayer and younger life, unless you happened to be there on one day of the year. Indeed, you would have to be there the night before, too. For the villagers say that the minute the midnight chimes cease striking in the tower of the parish church, and Christmas Eve passes into Christmas Day, any one who is awake in the front chamber of the inn, and has his windows open, is aware of a wonderful sweet perfume stealing in and filling the room.

If, as he wakes again toward morning and finds the perfume still persisting, he rouses himself to look out of the window in the gray light of the hour just before sunrise, or better still by moonlight should there be a moon, he will see a marvellous sight. The old thorn bush is completely covered with white blossoms, and all the air is sweet with their fragrance. Let him look again a moment after the first ray of the rising sun touches the branches and the bush will be as bare as ever.

The reason of the marvel, so you are told, is this. When Jesus died in Judæa, and all his disciples ran away, each to his own house, — so frightened were they of the Roman soldiery who had crucified him, — one man was found brave enough to come forward and openly own himself to be a friend of Jesus, and to offer a tomb in his own garden where the body of Jesus might be laid.



This man was Joseph of Arimathea. After

Jesus was buried Joseph felt so badly at the loss of his dear friend that he could not bear to stay in the old home where he had known him. So he sold all his goods, although he was a very rich man, and gave the money to the poor. Then putting on the garb of a pilgrim, and taking a thick staff which he had cut from a thorn bush in his garden, he journeyed from city to city and from land to land, climbing great mountains and crossing perilous seas, until at last he came to England. On the spot where the old inn garden now is he thrust his staff into the ground, built him a hut, and became a hermit, living many happy years in peaceful meditation. The staff took root, branched out more and more widely every year, and from the beginning blossomed every Christmas morning.

Somehow this quaint and lovely story always brings back to me the verse of the old English poet, —

> "Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

Such, the story goes, was the origin of the Glastonbury Thorn, — a variety of hawthorn

now seen in many English hedgerows and gardens. And wherever these Glastonbury thorn bushes grow, they blossom about Christmas time. But, we are assured, nowhere else is the blossoming as punctual or as abundant as on the old parent bush in Glastonbury.

IN THE REALM OF SONG
THERE IS NO KING

HUNGARIAN

IN THE REALM OF SONG THERE IS NO KING

HUNGARY is a land of music and of poetry. Go into a wayside inn of an evening and you will meet there the shoemaker, the storekeeper, a farmer or two, the blacksmith, each and every one transformed into a musician. One has his violin, another his bass viol, a third his flute or horn; and together they will extemporize the most bewitching music. Naturally the legends of their country are many of them set to music, — songs and ballads, familiar in every household; and some of the best of these legends have to do with poetry and the poet himself, the minstrel, or bard, who in Hungary is held in the same esteem as in Wales.

The story I have in mind is told in honor of Klingsohr of Hungary, and the scene opens, not in Hungary, but in Germany, just across the border. It was at the very beginning of the thirteenth century that the Landgrave

Hermann of Thuringia invited all the poets of his court to compete for a prize, and told them they themselves might choose what the prize should be for him who, in the Landgrave's judgment, composed and recited or sang the best poem.

The poets found it no easy matter to come to the choice of a prize. One proposed a golden crown, another a goodly sum of money, another knighthood and a castle; but none of these satisfied the majority who felt that, after all, success itself was a sufficient reward for the man who loved his work, and failure would make him so miserable that he would hardly care to live. So it was voted that the victor should receive just a wreath of bay leaves, and should be proclaimed king of poets; while those who were vanquished should be prepared to die at the hands of the executioner. It was no wonder, therefore, that although many had attended this preliminary meeting, — Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Heinrich von Veldech, Heinrich von

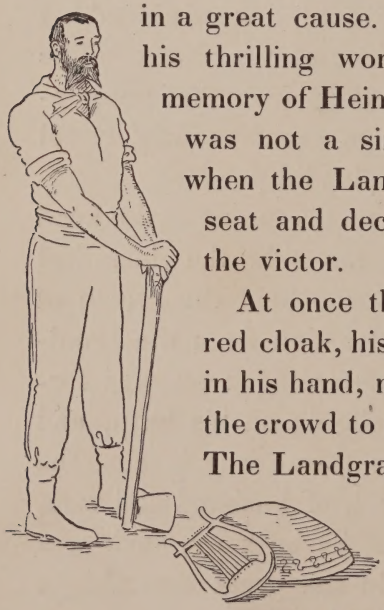
Ofterdingen, Reinhard von Zwetzen, Bitterolf and their peers, — when it came to the final test, only two, Heinrich von Ofterdingen and Wolfram von Eschenbach, proved confident and willing to put their fortune to the touch, to win or lose it all.

On the day named for the contest, the whole court — ladies in rich silks and velvets, knights, their armor laid aside, clad in garments hardly less gorgeous than those of the ladies they attended, great dignitaries of the church, in purple and scarlet and gold — were assembled in the hall of the palace at Wartburg. The doors were thrown wide open so that the populace also, who came in great crowds, could see something of the splendid pageant.

The Landgrave sat on his throne at the head of the hall, and by his side the beautiful Landgravine Sophia, who held the crown of bays in her hand. At a sign from the Landgrave, Heinrich von Ofterdingen stepped forward, struck a few chords on his harp, and began his song. His theme was love, — the love of parent and child, of husband and wife, of friend and friend. As he sang, such was his power, each one in the great assemblage

seemed to see his own home, the faces of those who were dear to him, and to live over the days of his happiest comradeships. And when he had finished, a great shout of approval went up, no one doubting that the prize must be his.

But Wolfram, with a proud smile, took the harp and began to play a great battle march, the prelude to his theme, which was heroism, the self-sacrifice which leaves home and friends and all that is dear and lays down life itself in a great cause. His martial strains, his thrilling words, swept away all memory of Heinrich's song, and there was not a single dissenting voice when the Landgrave rose from his seat and declared Wolfram to be the victor.



At once the executioner in his red cloak, his great polished sword in his hand, made his way through the crowd to the foot of the throne. The Landgrave asked Heinrich if he wished to say anything before he died. The vanquished poet

turned a fearless face to the multitude. "I do not question the justice of the decision," said he. "Wolfram is a greater poet than I and has fairly won in this contest. But I cannot own him to be king of poets. In a distant land I know one who, if given my theme, would easily surpass Wolfram. It is I that am unworthy, and not the theme of which I sing."

He threw off his cloak and turned to follow the executioner. But Wolfram raised his hand and said in a loud voice, "Stop! I do not want the crown on these terms. Let Heinrich bring here the poet of whom he speaks, and prove his claim, or else confess he has lied because he is afraid to die."

"Give me a year from this day," answered Heinrich, "and I will search Hungary from end to end until I find the man of whom I speak, — Klingsohr of Hungary, — and I will bring him here to make good my claim. If but a single voice declares against him, I will gladly forfeit my life."

"Very well," said the Landgrave; "but if you fail to keep your appointment, your harp and your shield shall be hewn in pieces by the

executioner, and your name shall be a byword among your people."

Month after month Heinrich journeyed hither and thither through the fair land of Hungary, and everywhere, at morning, noon, and night, in the wayside inn, in the workshops of the cities, in the wide fields of the country-side, he hears the people singing songs which he feels sure must have been composed by Klingsohr.

In the mountains he hears the miners singing at their work, and he asks them if Klingsohr taught their song to them. "It is the song the waters sing as they drop from the shining walls of the caverns of the earth. It was there we learned it," they answered. "We never heard of Klingsohr."

He comes out into the sunshine and wanders among the vineyards on the lower slopes of the hills, where the vintagers are singing in happy chorus as they bear great baskets of purple grapes to the wine-press. "Surely that is one of Klingsohr's songs you are singing, and you can tell me where he lives." "We do not know who wrote it," the vintagers answer, "and we never heard of Klingsohr; but it seems to

be in tune with the warm sun and the purple hillsides."

He enters the green depths of the forest and catches the notes of the hunter's horn playing a melody that seems the very voice of the forest itself; that surely must have been composed by Klingsohr. But the hunter is as ignorant as the vintager regarding Klingsohr. As for the tune, all the people thereabouts know it. It is a people's song. A like baffling answer meets his questioning of the shepherd singing beside his fire and the reaper swinging his scythe in time with a harvest song.

So he goes on, everywhere hearing what he feels sure to be the songs of the poet, but nowhere finding a trace of the poet himself, until one night, just after the sun has set, he comes out on the green plain through which the river Theiss flows and hears a voice singing the praises of the great plain of Hungary, more impressive in its vastness than the grandest mountains of earth, more plentiful in its returns to faithful labor than are the little valleys of other lands that lie among the hills, most beautiful when the morning sun lights up

the millions of dewdrops sparkling on its long waving grass, flashing with all the colors of the opal, which is Hungary's especial contribution to the jewels of earth. Then Heinrich knows he is in the presence of the man he seeks, and falling at his feet makes known his errand.

"You sing here in this lonely wilderness, unknown and unhonored. Even those who sing your songs do not know your name. Come to Germany," pleads Heinrich, "and be crowned by kings and honored by all the people."

"The dominion of the poet is not within the gift of any earthly king," answers Klingsohr. "When people sing his songs he reigns in their hearts, whether they know his name or not. And that tribute they pay not to him who sings for the sake of dominion, but to him who sings as the nightingale sings, because he cannot help it. Still, I will go with you, but not for the crown or the honor."

A year had passed since Heinrich went out from the Landgrave's court. It was the day on which he had promised to return. Once more

the court had assembled in the great hall and the people thronged without. The shadow on the dial pointed to noon. The Landgrave beckoned to the executioner who walked toward Heinrich's harp and shield, that lay in the centre of the hall, and a breathless silence fell on the multitude as he raised his sword. But before it fell, a sound of galloping horses was heard, and amid the cheers of the people Heinrich and Klingsohr, dusty and travel-stained, entered the hall. Bowing to the Landgrave, Klingsohr took up the harp. In the first few strains his marvellous power was revealed; and as he went on, knight and peasant, king and courtier, the wisest counsellor and the little child, who had strayed in attracted by the waving banners and the music, — all alike were under his spell and felt as if the minstrel were singing to him alone.

Wolfram took the crown of bays from his own head, and, placing it on Klingsohr's, silently clasped Heinrich's hand. The Landgrave begged the great minstrel to stay in his kingdom and receive the glory that was his due. But Klingsohr gently put aside the crown. "For," said he, "in the realm of

song there is no king; the bay buds and brings forth new leaves every spring. There are enough for us all."

Then leaping on his horse, he rode away and was never seen in Germany again. His chronicler tells us that he went back to the vast plain of Hungary. "His songs died away with the winds, but their spirit yet lives in the glees of the people, in the songs of the Hungarian heath."

THE OLD MAN WHO BROUGHT WITHERED TREES TO LIFE

JAPANESE

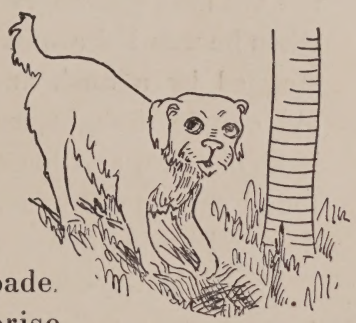
THE OLD MAN WHO BROUGHT WITHERED TREES TO LIFE

YOU know how fond the Japanese are of flowers. When the cherry-trees are in blossom they have a regular holiday; all the schools are closed, and all the shop people in the cities and the work people on the farms go off on picnics to the places where the cherry-trees grow most abundantly, to enjoy the beauty of the wonderful white trees. They plant these trees, and sometimes peach-trees and quince-trees and plum-trees, not for their fruit, but just for the sake of their blossoms. Perhaps you have seen pictures on fans or screens representing one of these flowering orchards, or it may be one of the great gardens of trellissed wistaria in long purple clusters. The Japanese see the beauty in a single flower, too; so that if you went to visit in a Japanese house, you would be likely to find in your room a single splendid rose or lily in a beautiful vase.

The Japanese are quite as fond of animals as they are of flowers, and of all kinds of living things. If they were not fond of them they could not draw such fine pictures of them, or make such wonderful little carvings of them in ivory and wood, or fashion them in lacquer work. I have a piece of Japanese raised brasswork representing a hawk on a rock above the sea, and another piece of lacquer work of a fish in a swirling river. Nobody could have done such work who had not loved these creatures, watched them when they were living, and been interested in their ways of life. Of course any one who likes animals is pretty sure to like dogs. Now the story I am going to tell you is a Japanese story that has to do with a dog and with flowers.

Long, long ago, the Japanese story-teller says, a good old man and his wife bought a dog. They had no children, poor old people; so they lavished all their attentions on the dog. The old lady used to say roguishly to her more fortunate neighbors, "I think I can see how people get fond of children if they can't have a dog." The dog got all the dainty bits from their table, and of course he grew as fond of

his owners as they were of him. One day they noticed the dog was making a terrible fuss in the little garden behind the house, throwing up the dirt with his paws, and working away for dear life, stopping now and then to bark, and then going at the hole he had made in the ground with fresh vigor and a great wagging of his tail. They thought he must be after some animal, perhaps a mischievous rat which had been raiding their pantry; so they ran out to help him with hoe and spade. What was their surprise and delight when just a few feet below ground they came across a great chest full of gold and silver and all sorts of precious things. Out of it they gave generous gifts to the poor, and with what was left they bought some fine rice-fields, and soon became very rich.



Now in the very next house on the same road there lived a bad old man and his wife; and as soon as they heard the cause of their neighbors' good luck, they borrowed the dog,

and after giving him a great feast, led him out into their garden by a string; but although they patted and petted him, he never offered to dig anywhere, and not a bark or a wag of the tail could they get out of him. He kept his tail between his legs, and made frantic efforts to get away and run back home. Then the old man got angry and beat the dog, who, when he was led around the garden once more, stopped by a bush and began to sniff. The old couple thought treasure must surely be hidden there, and began to dig; but all they found was an old bone. Then they killed the dog and buried him under a pine-tree.

Well, the days went on, and the dog did not come home; and by and by the wicked old man had to tell what had happened. Then the dog's master went to the grave and strewed flowers on it, and burned incense over it, and set a tray full of food near it for the dog's spirit to take on his journey to the spirit-land, where all good dogs go when they die, and went home feeling very lonely and sad; for he loved the dog and missed him.

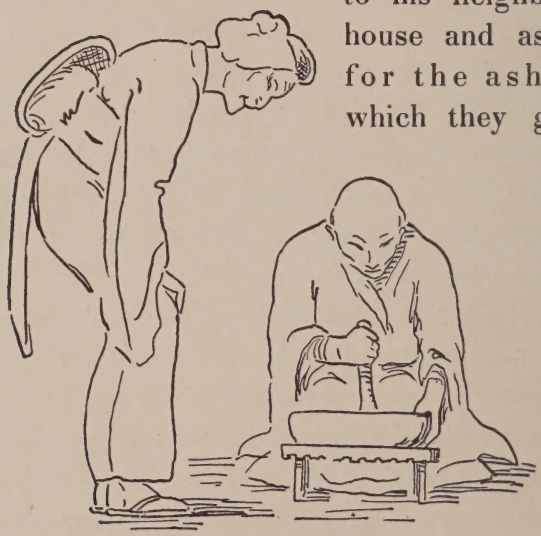
That night the dog appeared to him in a dream and told him to cut down the pine-tree

and make from the trunk near the roots a mortar and pestle, and to think of them as if they were his lost pet. Now of course the wicked old man, having killed the dog, did not dare to refuse the request of his neighbor; so the tree was cut down, and the mortar and pestle made.

It turned out to be a wonderful mortar; for whenever the good old man ground his rice in it, the rice was changed into jewels. Then the neighbors came to borrow the mortar; now of course it was foolish to lend it to them, after what had happened to the dog. But the good old man was perfectly willing that every one should share in his good fortune. No sooner did the bad-hearted neighbors put rice into the mortar, however, than the rice became dirt. In a rage they threw mortar and pestle into the fire and burned them up.

The simple souled old owner of the mortar wondered why it was not returned, until one night the dog again appeared in a dream, and after revealing the meanness and treachery of the old couple next door, told the good old man to gather up the ashes of the mortar, for they were very precious. Just a pinch of

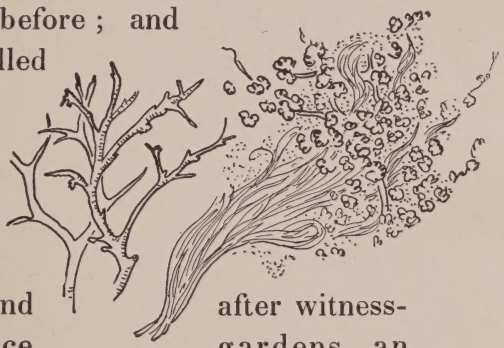
them thrown in the air among the branches of a withered tree would cause it to revive and break out into full blossom. So the old man, grieving over the loss of his treasure, ran to his neighbors' house and asked for the ashes, which they gave



him willingly, congratulating themselves that they had escaped punishment, and laughing at the old man's foolishness.

When the old man got home, he climbed up into a withered cherry-tree in his garden and threw a pinch of the precious ashes into the air. Sure enough, every twig broke out into blossom, and the air was sweet with their fra-

grance. Then, taking the ashes, the old man, intent on giving pleasure to other people also, journeyed through the country, and everywhere he went the withered cherry-trees and plum-trees and peach-trees blossomed as no trees ever blossomed before; and all the land was filled with light and color. News of the marvel soon reached the prince, who sent for the old man, and after witnessing in the palace gardens an exhibition of his skill, gave him a present of fine silks and thanked him heartily for so beautifying the land.



Now the bad neighbor, who had not cared at all about what his old acquaintance had been doing before, the moment he heard of the prince's reward, gathered up some of the ashes of the mortar that remained where it had been burnt, and hastening to the castle town, proclaimed that he also could bring dead trees to life. But when he climbed up in a dead plum-tree and threw the ashes into the air,

not a blossom appeared; but the ashes flew into the prince's eyes. Then the servants seized the old man and beat him and threw him out of the palace garden.

So the dog brought joy to his friends, confusion to his foes, and beauty to the whole country-side.

WHERE MONEY IS PLENTY AS WATER

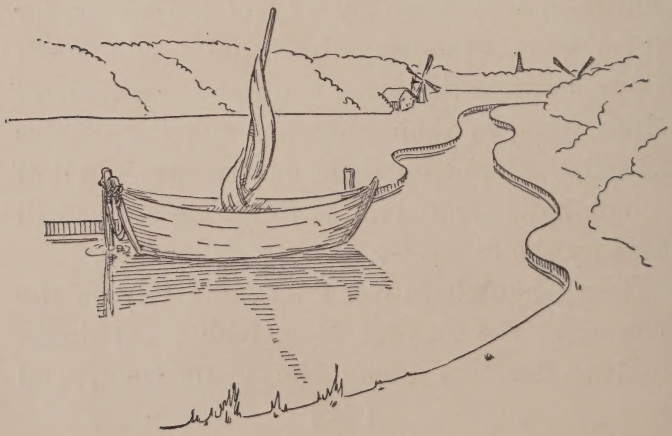
DUTCH

WHERE MONEY IS PLENTY AS WATER

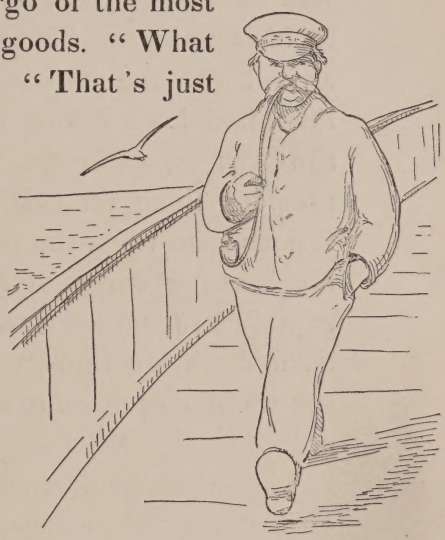
IN Holland there is plenty of two things, — water and money. Of course every one knows about the first, and you need travel only a very short time in Holland to learn about the second. If you are travelling with a Hollander, as you approach each town and even village, he will be apt to tell you, "Here live so and so and so and so, — very rich men, millionnaires." It would seem that the phrase about money being as plenty as water had its origin in Holland. Moreover, a good deal of Dutch money came by way of the water, for the Dutch have always been great sailors and traders across the seas; witness the models of ships hung in their churches and the effigies of ships carved on their gravestones. All of which is illustrated in the following story, still told by the fishermen of the Zuyder Zee.

Long ago there was a splendid city on the shores of the Zuyder Zee, with great docks and warehouses along the water-front, and

palaces and parks on the shady, winding canals; for there were many very rich people in the city. Unfortunately, they were as selfish and hard-hearted as they were rich, and so the poor people who lived in the same city, who worked for these rich people and depended on their bounty, were very wretched and unhappy. Among the richest of them was a certain widow, named Richberta, whose husband had been a great merchant and ship-owner, and had left her all his property. She gratified her every whim, bought anything that came into her head, and rejoiced if she could get something that was richer and finer than anything her neighbors possessed. Her one desire seemed to be to get ahead of her



neighbors. But at last her ingenuity was exhausted; she could think of no new extravagance. So she summoned the captain of one of her great merchant ships, and told him he must sail away and in a year's time bring her back a cargo of the most precious of all earthly goods. "What is that?" asked he. "That's just the point," said she. "I don't know. You must find out and bring it to me a year from this time."



In vain the captain pleaded for more definite instructions; she turned her back, left the room, and shut the door in his face. So he gathered his crew and cruised aimlessly around for weeks. He asked advice of his officers, but each one had a different idea. He paced the quarter-deck, and smoked and thought, and thought and smoked. Finally he struck on what seemed a brilliant idea. The

most precious thing on earth, of course, was that without which men could not live, — bread, the staff of life. So he sailed into a port on the Baltic Sea and laid in an overflowing cargo of fine Russian grain. Getting home well within the year, he hurried from the pier to his employer's house, to inform her of his arrival with the promised cargo. She, meantime, had been telling all her neighbors that she was expecting a shipload of the most precious thing on earth, and she flew into a furious rage when she thought how they would laugh at her cargo of grain. In spite of the captain's remonstrances, she vowed she would have the grain thrown into the sea, and said she was going down to the pier to see that her orders were carried out.

Thereupon he hurried back to his ship, and on his way told some poor people what was going to happen, in the hope that they might get some of the grain. When the rich widow arrived at the pier, a great crowd of poor people had gathered there and begged that, instead of throwing the grain away, she should distribute it among them; for they were starving. But she would not listen to them, and

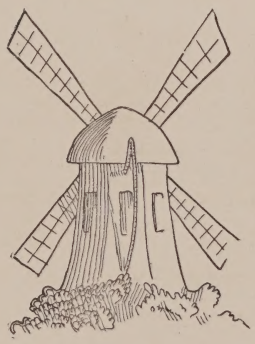
as sack after sack of fine grain was cast into the sea the captain grew more and more indignant, until he could contain himself no longer. "Madam," said he, "may the time come when you will suffer for the lack of a peck measure of grain to make a loaf of bread!" The lady made no answer. But as the last sack of grain sunk beneath the waves, she drew a ring from her finger, and throwing it after the grain, said loud enough for the whole multitude of spectators to hear, "Not until that ring comes back to me shall I ever lack for bread."

That very same night her cook, cleaning a fish for supper, found the ring in its stomach. Ring-eating fishes must be a widespread genus; for if we may trust the story-tellers, such fish have been found in all waters of the

world. Well the lady no sooner saw her ring than she shook with fear; and she had good reason to; for even as she held it in her hand, messengers of ill began to arrive. Her ships had foundered; her warehouses had tumbled in ruins. The very palace over her head caught fire, and she found herself in the streets, without a penny, and what was worse, without a friend; for her rich neighbors had no reason to love her, and she did not dare to ask help of the poor whom she had wronged. So she disappeared from the city, and no one knew where she went or when she died.

But the rest of the rich people took no warning from her fate. Nor did they see anything significant in the curious formation of a sandbar, beginning at the very spot where the grain had been cast into the sea. The bar increased until entrance to the harbor was blocked and commerce ceased. The wharves were deserted and rotted away. Such of the poor as could, left the city. But the rich stayed on and were as cruel and heartless as ever. Then the salt water, oozing through the dikes, ill kept for lack of watchmen, made

all the wells brackish, so that the water was unfit to drink. "Never mind," said the rich burghers; "we will drink wine." And they turned a deaf ear to the poor beggars at their gates asking for a sup of beer. "It 's a good riddance," said one of the dwellers in palaces to another, when the last of the poor had left the city. And then one Christmas Eve, when after a great feast and carouse the whole city was asleep, the end came. The sea broke through the weakened dikes, and in the morning, where the city had been was a wide waste of waters shining in the sun. And now the fishermen of the Zuyder Zee say that on any Christmas morning if the sea is smooth, and you are sailing over the spot, you can look down and see the towers and palaces of the old city far below and hear the faint chime of bells. But then the Zuyder Zee rarely is smooth on Christmas morning.



THE KNIGHT OF THE ALMOND BRANCH

SPANISH

THE KNIGHT OF THE ALMOND BRANCH

ONE night, in the far-off times when the Moors were still masters of Toledo, the city was all awake and busy, — lights in the houses, horsemen riding through the gates and clattering up the narrow streets, the courtyards full of servants attending to arriving guests, polishing up armor, and leading away the horses to be fed and groomed. For on the following morning representatives of the noblest Moorish tribes, or clans, had been summoned to Toledo by one of the most famous Moorish chieftains, Alzarque, on the occasion of a festival and tournament given by him to celebrate his betrothal to Celindaja. And no one had declined the invitation. They were all there, — the Andalles, the Gomeles, the Sarracenòs, the Abencerrojès, the Portolesès, and the Mazas.

It was a splendid sight when in the bright morning sunshine the chieftains and their escorts of soldiery, each dressed in distinctive

livery, wound in long procession through the narrow streets of the city, on their way to the place of tourney. Here was a company clad all in scarlet, with white plumes in their caps, and following, a company in yellow, with blue

and white plumes, and then a company in dark green, with scarlet plumes, and so on, — a long line of varying color. The air was filled with the sound of music and with the applauding cries of the people, who, looking down from balconies and windows, showered their favorites with flowers. When they came to the place of tourney, the whole procession passed in review before Celindaja, who sat on a sort of throne erected at the head of the lists. Behind her stood one fully as beautiful, a Christian girl, Isabella, who had been

captured in one of the Moorish forays at Aragon, four or five years before, and sold as a slave into the family of Celindaja. Tall, slender, golden-haired, and blue-eyed, her beauty was in marked contrast to the dark faces, brown eyes, and black hair of those around her.

Many events had already taken place, in which Alzarque and his followers had invariably been the victors, partly because of their skill, and partly, perhaps, because of the courtesy of their antagonists. Suddenly above the music of the Moorish bands sounded a long, clear trumpet-call, and then another and another. Instantly all was confusion; for the Moors recognized the sound as that which they had often heard coming from the camps of the Christians, — a Christian bugle call; and they thought the Christians had taken advantage of the festival to plan a surprise. But while the Moors were hurriedly preparing for battle, a messenger with a flag of truce rode into the lists and delivered this message to Alzarque: "Don Ramiro of Aragon begs to be allowed to share in the betrothal festivities of the courteous Alzarque and the beauti-

ful Celindaja." The warriors rode back to their places, the spectators again seated themselves, and Alzarque invited the Christian knight to enter, and urged the noblest and bravest Moors to accept his challenge to friendly rivalry in the sports of the tourney. Under the Moorish banners draped on the entrance to the lists rode Don Ramiro, — a splendid figure, clad in complete steel armor that flashed in the sunlight ; his saddle rested on a blanket of crimson velvet trimmed with gold, and on his shield, in letters of gold, was the motto, "Fidelity." He wore no plume, but in its place was a branch of pink almond blossom. As he halted his white horse in front of the dais to salute Celindaja, the queen of the tourney, Isabella's face suddenly lighted up ; for the knight's visor was raised for the moment, and she saw his face and caught in his eyes a silent appeal for recognition. But those who noticed the change in her face, which up to this time had looked weary and listless, in spite of the efforts of the Moorish heroes to attract her attention, thought it was due merely to pleasure in seeing one of her fellow countrymen ; and indeed the very sight

of the steel armor, as it flashed across the lists, had brought her joy.

In the contests that followed, although they were stubbornly and skilfully fought by his rivals, Don Ramiro was the victor. Then the Moors proposed that he should engage with them in a test of skill peculiarly their own, — the picking up of a bracelet three times on the point of his spear, while riding his horse at full speed. Don Ramiro said he would try it if the bracelet used was that of Isabella, the Christian slave. At the order of her mistress, Isabella unclasped the bracelet, and Celindaja gave it to Don Ramiro. So perfect was his horsemanship that the Moors themselves acknowledged that he accomplished the feat with a grace and ease superior to their own, and the spectators generously applauded him, as with the Moorish warriors he rode up the lists to receive the customary recognition which always closed the tournaments, — a scarf from the hands of some lady. Since Isabella was the only Christian there, her mistress granted her the privilege of rewarding Don Ramiro. As she handed him the scarf, he returned her bracelet, of hollowed gold, and in it, when she

clasped it on her arm, she saw a note was hidden.

The skies were red with sunset when the multitude returned to the city, and they kept

up the feasting and dancing late into the night. At the house of Alzarque, Don Ramiro was royally entertained; for it is a part of the Moslem faith to be hospitable even to your foe when he is within your gates. At last, however, the sound of music and dancing

ceased, the lights went out one by one, and the streets lay quiet in the moonlight. In and out among the houses, keeping in the shadow as much as possible, darting quickly and silently across the moonlit spaces, where their armor flashed for a moment, a knight and his page reached at last the city gates. The sentry was asleep, overcome by the day's festivities. The boy, for so he seemed, slipped back the bolts, and they passed through, closing the gates behind them. Outside a servant waited with three horses. They mounted and rode together through the moonlit night, away and away across the wide plains, over the bare mountain heights, and through the dark mountain passes till they were out of reach of any pursuer. At last they came to Saragossa, the home of Isabella, where she and Don Ramiro had played together, boy and girl, the last time they had met years ago.

As they stood together on the garden terrace, — Isabella no longer in the disguise of a page, — Don Ramiro plucked a branch of almond blossom from a nearby tree, and said, "You remember long ago you gave me an almond blossom and told me it was an emblem

of fidelity; and when you were captured and taken away, I vowed I would always wear a spray of almond till I found and rescued you."

"I was a long time waiting," answered Isabella; "and sometimes I lost heart, and thought my kinsmen had forgotten and abandoned me; but the old proverb is right, 'Fidelity is the peace of life.'"

Not long after, the marriage festival of Don Ramiro and Isabella was celebrated. Alzarque and Celindaja, so they say, were invited to the wedding, and under safe conduct came to Saragossa and returned to Toledo. Such were the courtesies of generous foes in the old days.

SAINT PATRICK AND THE DRUIDS

IRISH

SAINT PATRICK AND THE DRUIDS

THERE is one saint in the calendar whose name we all know; but most of us know little of him beside his name. Possibly we may have heard that he drove the snakes out of Ireland; yet we are not familiar with the details even of that famous exploit. I was very glad, therefore, to come across an old British legend which seemed to me to give some idea of just what kind of man he really was; for no such story could have grown up about any one except a brave and loving soul. It reads as if it had been preserved in the affectionate memory of some brotherhood of monks, told by the elder to the younger from generation to generation, and finally, perhaps, written on parchment and stored away in the monastery archives.

It was the great Spring Festival day of the Druids; and at that time the Druid religion was the religion best known in the British Isles. It was the custom on that day for the

people to climb the highest unwooded mountain peaks and hilltops throughout the kingdom very early in the morning before the sun rose. A great number of trees had been cut down, piled up in the shape of an altar, on each of these hilltops, and afterward garlanded with flowers.

The king and his courtiers stood beside the largest altar on the highest mountain. There was a strict law of the land that on that morning no glimmer of light, even from camp-fire or torch, should be seen until the king gave the signal. This signal was the setting on fire of the great pile of wood by the high-priest of the Druids at the king's order. As the long column of flame leaped into the sky, answering bonfires flashed from hill to hill across the whole land, north and south, east and west. This was the opening ceremony of the festival that celebrated the coming of the spring.

What was the anger of the king, therefore, on this particular day, long before his own fire was kindled, to see far down in the valley, off toward the ocean, a little glimmer of light. He sent off four or five of his warriors to find the offenders and bring them before

him. Close to the seashore they found Saint Patrick and a little company of priests, who had just landed from the ship that had brought them from Rome to be missionaries to the Britons. They had set up a little movable

altar on the sands, lighted the candles on it, and were saying their morning prayers.

When they were brought before the king, of course Saint Patrick told him that he did not know he was offending against the laws. Certainly, if he had known the law, he would not have lighted the candles; he was simply observing a rite of his own religion. Then the king asked him what this religion might be.

Saint Patrick began to tell him; and so interested did the king and the rest of the people become that they forgot all about lighting the great bonfire, and the sun rose in a clear, warm sky while Saint Patrick was talking.

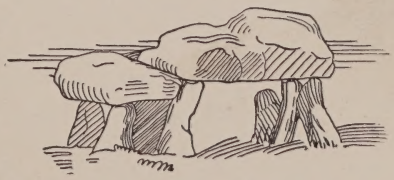
There was one exception to the general interest, however, in the person of the high-priest. He became more and more angry and jealous and impatient as Saint Patrick went on. Finally he broke in rudely, "What does your religion amount to? Does it give you power to perform miracles, as mine does?" "What miracle can you do?" asked Saint Patrick.

Thereupon the high-priest waved his staff in the air, and at once great black clouds gathered fast from below the horizon, and climbing up across the sky, hid the sun. It grew bitterly cold, a sharp wind blew out of the east, and a driving snow-storm set in. The flowers wilted, the birds stopped singing and scurried to shelter, and the people wrapped their cloaks about them and shivered.

"That's all very fine," said Saint Patrick. "Now clear it off again." "Oh, I can't do that," said the old high-priest. "Isn't it

enough to raise such a storm?" "Not a bit of it, and bad 'cess to you!" said Saint Patrick. "Any one can make the world look black, and make people miserable. Is that all your religion comes to? Now see what my religion will do!" and he waved his staff in the air three times. He had hardly finished when the clouds broke, the sun shone out bright and warm, the snow melted, the birds came out from their coverts and began to sing, and all the people broke into a joyous shout.

It was a blessed gift, that of Saint Patrick. Better still, it seems to have been an easy matter for him to pass the gift on to the king and his people. That may be the reason why Irishmen are always so light of heart, so nimble of wit, and so quick to change a tear to a smile. The Irishman who told me the tale said it was a pity the gift didn't spread beyond the Emerald Isle. But of course he was prejudiced and insisted that it must have been in Ireland and nowhere else that Saint Patrick landed and wrought his miracle.



THE WINNING OF THE SPURS

GERMAN

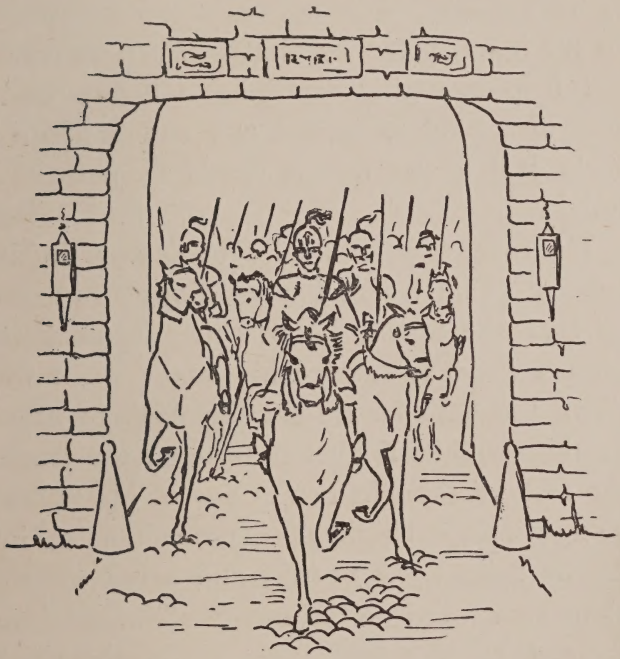
THE WINNING OF THE SPURS

THE stories of Roland have a place in the traditions of nearly every nation in Europe. Aside from the great Song of Roland, one group of stories exists in Italy, another in France, another in Germany, another in Scandinavia. Among the most stirring of all are the German stories. A good example is the legend of Rolandseck, the ruined castle on the Rhine. But a less familiar story I find recorded in the local traditions of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). It illustrates the time when men were just learning how to work together for the common good under some great national leader, — the beginning of modern nations, of modern patriotism. And who is more patriotic to-day than the Germans? It is to them we owe the word Fatherland, — Vaterland.

Charlemagne, so the old tale runs, on a certain Christmas Day, got all his knights together in the great courtyard of his castle and told them that a year from that time he

wanted one of them to bring him a Christmas gift. It seems that in the forest of Ardennes, which was part of his kingdom, there lived a robber baron. That is, this baron was a knight that owed allegiance to no king, and had no country; he only cared to enrich himself, and never thought of serving or helping any one else. Many, journeying through the forest, had been waylaid, robbed, and killed by him. He was to be recognized by a splendid jewel which shone in the very centre of his shield. Charlemagne told the assembled knights that he wanted them to ride together to the forest, but when they reached its borders they were to separate, and taking different paths, search it thoroughly until the robber knight was found. Only one knight was to fight with him, in accordance with the oath which every one of them had taken, when he became a knight, to give fair play even to the wickedest foe. Charlemagne hoped that some among his knights would be victorious, and as a token of victory would bring him for a gift on the following Christmas the great jewel which the robber knight wore on his shield.

Among those who went out on this quest was Milon; and he took his son Roland with him as his squire. For many days Milon and



Roland searched the winding ways of the forest, but found no trace of the robber knight. One day Milon, weary of riding to and fro, turned aside from the beaten path, and finding an open space shadowed by tall trees and shut in by thickets, dismounted,

asked Roland to help him take off his armor, tethered his horse, and lay down to rest. He was soon fast asleep. Roland, handling his father's armor, could not resist the temptation to try it on, piece by piece. Then he could not help mounting his father's horse, which was also clad in armor, and riding about a little, just to see how it would seem to be a knight.

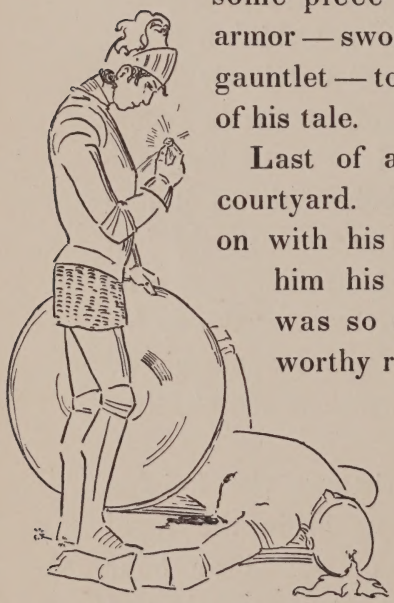
He rode a good deal farther than he intended. Startled at finding himself in a new part of the forest, he was just turning the horse's head to retrace his steps, when way down the path he caught the flash of armor as the sunlight fell on it through the leaves. At first he thought it was one of his father's companions, a knight of Charlemagne's; but as the rider drew nearer, and a ray of sunshine struck full on the centre of his shield, it seemed as if a ray from within the shield leaped out to meet it, a splendid, dazzling ray of many colors.

And then Roland knew he was face to face with the robber knight. It was too late to escape; for at that very instant the knight saw Roland, and lowering his lance rode at

him at full speed. Putting spurs to his horse, Roland met him midway; and both riders were thrown from their horses by the shock. Drawing their swords, they continued the fight on foot. The knight, discovering the youth of his antagonist, did not think it worth while to exert himself, and carelessly left a vital spot unguarded. Roland struck home, and the knight fell dead. Wrenching the jewel from the shield, Roland thrust it into his doublet, and leaving the dead knight just as he was, rode back to his father, whom he found still asleep. He could not make up his mind to tell his father of his adventure; so after a few days further fruitless search, they rode back home.

On the following Christmas the knights were gathered together again in the royal city, and the Emperor appointed an hour when they were to come to the castle and tell him of their adventure. One by one the knights rode into the courtyard, where the Emperor received them. They all had the same story to tell. They had found the body of him whom they supposed to be the robber baron, clad in full armor, but there was no

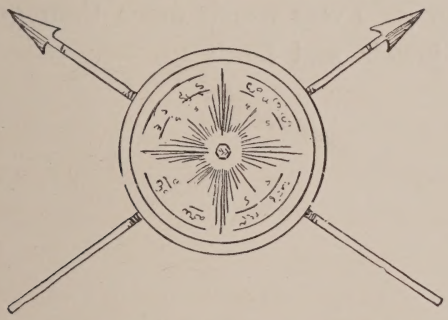
jewel in his shield. If it had ever been there it had been taken away by the man who had killed him. None of them claimed the credit of that. Each of them, however, had brought some piece of the robber knight's armor — sword or lance, corselet or gauntlet — to bear witness to the truth of his tale.



Last of all, Milon rode into the courtyard. Roland had helped him on with his armor, and had handed him his shield. But his father was so depressed at having no worthy report of his adventures to make to the king that he took no notice of anything and rode moodily into the king's presence with his eyes fixed on the ground.

What was his surprise, therefore, the moment he had passed through the castle gates, when he was greeted with a great shout of welcome, the multitude of spectators cheering him again and again. For in the midst of his shield, set there by Roland, was the jewel of

the robber baron. Of course Milon denied all knowledge of how it came there, and Roland had to tell the whole story of his adventure. Milon was even more glad that his son should be the hero of the day than he



would have been if he himself had won the gift for the king. Then Charlemagne told Roland to ask anything he wished for a Christmas gift in return, and Roland answered, "Give me the promise that I shall be among those knights who always ride closest to your side, and meet the foes you meet, and serve the causes you serve."

So Charlemagne and Milon and Roland each received a gift that made that day for them a happy Christmas. For Charlemagne's real gift, the one he prized most highly, was not the jewel, but another noble knight of

proved valor to help him in every generous enterprise. Milon had received proof of the brave manhood of his son; and Roland had won the privilege of serving under the bravest and wisest leader of his day. And any one of these gifts was worth more than gold and silver, jewels and lands.

THE CHICORY GIRL OF THE CAMPAGNA

ITALIAN

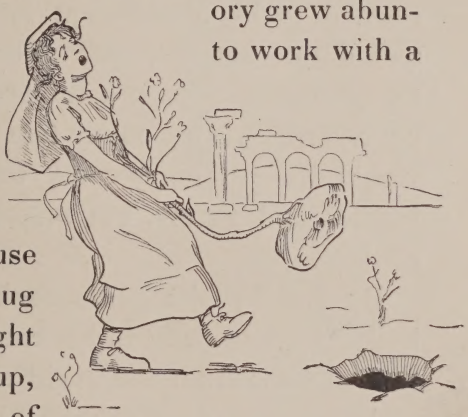
THE CHICORY GIRL OF THE CAMPAGNA

EVERY Italian child, particularly if he has been brought up in the country-side near Rome, must have felt something of the charm of the buried world beneath his feet, the world of long, long ago, — buried cities, temples, palaces, wonderful statues, lamps and vases of gold and silver and bronze. Every now and then the mattock of the farmer, the shovel of the well-digger, turns up some beautiful treasure of that olden time, or the earth breaks through into the court of some noble palace. And that was even more true in the days before scientific excavation, when the stories that are told over and over again to Italian children began to take shape. Naturally, many of these stories have to do with this hidden world. It was about this, and not about magical forests or wonderful lands beyond the sea, that the Italian child, and the childlike Italian, wove his fancies and dreams and superstitions.

And, curiously enough, the stories themselves, when you come to examine them, often prove to be a part of that elder past as truly as are the recovered statues and palaces and temples; for many of these stories are plainly adaptations of old Roman and Grecian myths and traditions about gods and demi-gods and heroes. The romance of Italy lies in the mingling of this noble and beautiful past with the splendor of the wonderful Italian skies and hills and seas that are the same to-day as they were thousands of years ago. And the practical service which Italy has rendered mankind has been in the bringing to light of that buried past and making it live again in the hope and the work of the greatest writers and artists of the world to-day. That is the whole story of the Renaissance, familiar to my older readers, — the parable of all which, and much besides, I think they will find in the following story, which, with many variations, is still told by the peasantry that frequent the Roman markets. The children may hear the story and let the parable alone.

There was once a poor man who made his living by gathering and selling chicory. Just

at Carnival time trade was especially good, so he took with him his wife and three daughters to help in the work. When they got out on the Campagna they separated, so as to find as much chicory as possible. Now the youngest daughter soon discovered a place where the chicory grew abundantly, and set to work with a will. One particularly large plant was so deep rooted that she had to use both hands and tug with all her might before it came up, and then much of the earth came up with it, leaving a great hole in the ground. When she looked into the hole, however, to her amazement she discovered beneath, not a mere dark pit or cave, but a splendid room, handsomely furnished, and brightly lighted with great candelabra. A flight of marble steps led down into the room, and in the centre was a table set with all sorts of rich and dainty food. The poor



girl never had much to eat, anyway, and she was very hungry from working so hard; so down she went and took a place at the table, meaning to wait till the master or mistress came back. But immediately invisible hands placed the viands on her plate; and as that seemed to be a sufficient invitation, she ate and drank her fill, and afterward wandered away through long corridors and beautiful courtyards, seeing many fine things that she would like to carry back to her father and mother and sisters, but meeting not a single soul.

By and by she came back to the dining-hall once more, and to her consternation found the entrance from the world above was closed and the steps were gone. The same invisible hands had prepared a supper for her, however, and opened a door that led into a sleeping-room, where there was a soft couch already prepared. And at last, in spite of her anxiety and her weeping, she fell asleep. So it went on day after day. Every day she found new rooms and new treasures in her wanderings, and always she was taken care of by these invisible attendants, seeing no one, hearing

no one, until at last, when it seemed as if she could bear the loneliness no longer, a door was opened, and there at the end of a great hall, on a splendid throne, sat a king of dark and strange countenance, who asked her why she wept, and what more could be done that would make her contented and happy. Then she told him she could never be happy unless she could see her own people and live with them.

"But think," said he, "of the miserable hut, the hard pallet of straw, the poor food and drink. Would you exchange all you have here for that?" "Yes," said the girl, "for that and my friends." "Well," said he, "you have been here longer than you think — three months. But I will let you go on one condition; in another three months you must come back and live here again."

The poor girl was glad to agree to any-

thing, if only she might go home once more. So the king ordered the way by which she came to be opened for her; and sure enough, there were the marble stairs, and at the top of them, out on the Campagna, a splendid chariot and horses that drove her rapidly to her home. Her family were delighted to see her; although, to tell the truth, the sisters were a little envious of the fine clothes in which she returned and the gorgeous chariot. But their jealousy and covetousness were quieted for a while by the pot of gold which she brought to each of them as a present. So it went on for a year or two. They could never get her to tell them just where she went, and the chariot drove too fast for them to follow.

One day they were admiring some of the gold pieces, turning them over in their hands, and the younger sister foolishly said, "What are you wondering at — the pot of gold? That is nothing to all the splendid treasures of the place where the gold came from." So they led her on to tell them more and more about the wonderful realm beneath the earth, and the dark king. Then, little by little, they

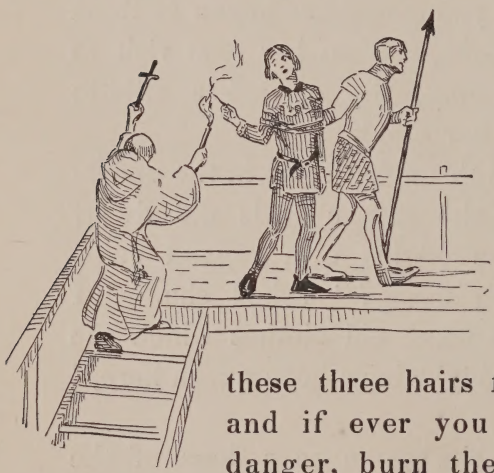
persuaded her to think of the dark king as a conjurer, a demon, meaning her harm, and urged her to take with her on her next return a stiletto, with which to kill him. In that way they thought they might all get at the treasures and divide them. Much against her will at first, the younger sister began to think they might be right, and on her next visit to the king's dwelling, she carried a stiletto hidden beneath her cloak.

As she passed through a room in the underground palace she saw a little old dwarf patching up one of his own ragged suits. "What are you doing?" asked she. "I am patching up some old clothes which she must wear who might have been queen here," said he.

Just beyond she came to a door of the king's room; it was open, and within the king himself lay asleep. "Now is the time for me to strike him!" she thought; so, taking a lighted candle in a golden candle-stick, she crept to his side, and was just lifting the dagger when a drop of hot wax fell on the king's face and he awoke. Seeing what she meant to do, he grew very sad, and told

her she could no longer stay in the palace, but must go back to all the hardship and poverty of the old life, which could never appear the same now she had known something better.

Then he ordered the servants to take all her fine clothing from her, put on the poor rags of the dwarf, and drive her away. But just as she was leaving, he relented and said gently, "You must go, but take with you these three hairs from my beard, and if ever you are in great danger, burn them, and I will come to your aid."



Soon she was out on the great plain again and walked wearily home. So hungry and tired was she that the bread and sour wine which she saw on the table would have been welcome enough. But her family refused to recognize her in her ragged boy's clothes, — she who had so often returned in

silken gown in a gilded coach, — and they shut the door in her face.

She wandered on hopelessly till she came to the palace of the king in the neighboring city. There she was given employment among the stable-boys, for no one suspected she was a girl. One day she helped the princess to mount for a morning hunt. Struck by the handsome face and gracious manners of the supposed stable-boy, the princess asked that he be transferred to service in the household. So fond did she become of her new servant that she had the king promote him from one post to another, until he was made high chamberlain, and then the princess wanted to marry him. This, of course, was impossible; and the poor chicory gatherer, afraid to reveal her secret, kept putting the princess off on one excuse and another, until, enraged beyond measure, she falsely accused the chamberlain of a crime against the king, who promptly threw the former favorite into prison and ordered his execution.

All was ready: the masked executioner climbed the scaffold with his axe; the priest stood beside the victim with a lighted candle;

and the king was just going to give the command for the prisoner's arms to be tied and the cap to be drawn over the face, when she stretched out her hand and placed one of the precious hairs in the candle flame. At once there came a sound as of a great troop of horsemen galloping across the plain, the sound of trumpets and a clash of steel. A second hair was burned, and the whole market-place around the scaffold was filled with steel-clad soldiers, completely shutting in the king and his retinue. And at the burning of the last hair, the dark king himself stood at the foot of the scaffold.

"Who are you that you should kill my wife?" said he to the executioner. "Who is your wife, that I should kill her?" said the bewildered man, leaning on his axe.

Then the dark king looked at the supposed chamberlain, and she owned her deceit, but cleared herself of any deeper crime. So they gladly let her go, and the dark king, placing her on the saddle in front of him, rode away, with his army. When they were well out on the plain, he told her he had claimed her as his wife to save her life; but unless she was

willing, he would not urge his suit. Of course she consented; for she had come to love the dark king, as she thought of him, in spite of his ugly looks and his strange ways.

No sooner had her word been given than the King of the Buried Realm of the Past, who had been under enchantment until a maid should love and wed him of her own free will, was transformed back into his own true self, as white as the whitest, and handsome as the day. Henceforward they lived together in the upper world of sunshine and flowers, and all the treasures that had so long been hidden in the earth were once more brought to light to beautify the dwelling of her who had been the poor chicory girl of the Campagna.

THE ELFIN COW

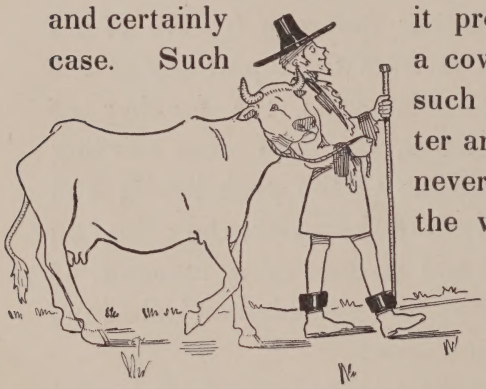
WELSH

THE ELFIN COW

ANY one who has ever visited Wales will remember that one feature of its landscape, as seen from the top of any of the wild Welsh mountains, is the number of beautiful little lakes, the lake often nestling in some hollow close to the peak itself; and as you look down into the water, the colors on its surface shift and change every moment, as the cloud and mist, the sunshine and shadow, sweep to and fro above it.

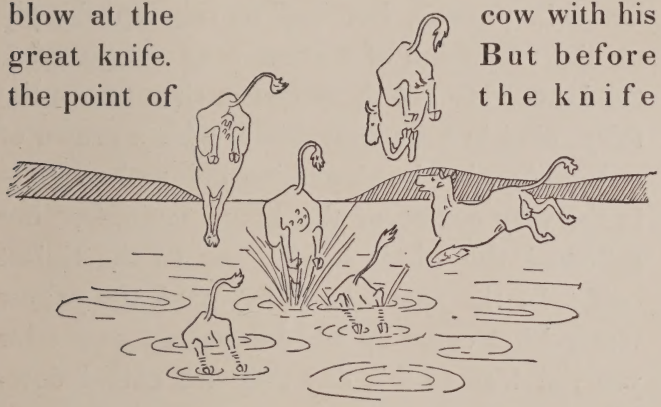
Each of these little lakes has a fairy legend connected with it, and no wonder! Indeed, the Gwraged Annwn, or elfin ladies, were thought to live in these lakes, and at nightfall to lead out their yellow kine to feed along the high mountain pastures. Sometimes a farmer, going out very early on a summer morning, would see some of these yellow kine disappearing behind a great crag of the mountain far above, while his own cows and sheep were still lying down peacefully in the lower pas-

tures along the road. And one day, to the great joy of an old farmer of Dyssyrnant, when his herd came down from the mountain to be milked in the evening, he found among them one of these same yellow kine. Such an event was believed to bring great good luck; and certainly it proved so in his case. Such a cow, such calves, such milk and butter and cheese, were never before seen in the whole countryside. The farmer soon became very rich, owning great herds and doing a thriving business in the neighboring market town. But like many a rich man, he forgot the cause of his wealth and thought only how he could get more. He argued that the elfin cow must be getting to an age where the only profit to be got out of her was from the price she would bring as beef. So he proceeded to feed her up for the market; and here, too, she proved marvellously responsive, for she kept getting



fatter and fatter up to the very day set for her killing.

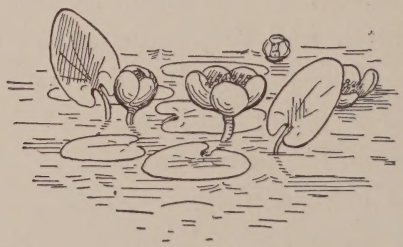
All the neighbors gathered together, and the butcher, baring his arm, struck a mighty blow at the cow with his great knife. But before the point of the knife



touched a hair of the hide, the butcher's arm was palsied, and the knife dropped from his fingers. The people heard a voice like the sound of a silver trumpet, and looking up the valley in the direction from which it came, they saw a beautiful fairy, clad all in green, standing on a crag above Lyn Barfog, and heard her say, or rather sing, —

"Come, yellow Anvil, stray horns,
Speckled one of the lake
And of the homeless Dodin,
Arise, come home!"

Whereupon the elfin cow and all her children and children's children, a great herd, started up the mountain toward the lake at full gallop. The miserly farmer hurried off on his best horse in pursuit, but had to rein up sharply on the very edge of a great crag overhanging the lake. He got there just in time to see the fairy, clad in green garments, with a crown of red gold on her head, sinking below the waters in the very centre of the lake; and after her followed the whole herd down to the tiniest calf. In the spot where they sank the yellow water-lilies came up and blossomed year after year, and so to this day they are called cow-lilies.



HOW THE CZAR LOST THE STAG AND FOUND HIMSELF

RUSSIAN

HOW THE CZAR LOST THE STAG AND FOUND HIMSELF

A STORY more widely spread through Europe than even the stories of Charlemagne and Roland is that which has become familiar to most of us in America through Longfellow's beautiful poem of "Robert of Sicily." But, unlike the story of Roland, not only the scenery of this story changes as it is adapted by different peoples, but the characters also change; they too are nationalized in name and in nature; and while the main incident of the story remains the same, the minor incidents that lead up to it vary widely in the different versions.

A picturesquely local version of the story is that told among the Cossacks in their language, the Ruthenian dialect. Where in the Sicilian story every detail is sharp and clear, — the exact name and parentage of every character, the particular city and river and road, — in the Russian story there is something of the vagueness and largeness of the

vast steppes, the deep forests, and the wide waters of that lonely land. What I am going to tell you, says the Cossack story-teller, to his mates gathered about the camp-fire, as the sunset fades out from the great unbroken circle of the sky, — what I am going to tell you, remember, did not happen to any ruler of our people. I would not speak a word against them, or lead you to think ill of them or of any of their ancestors.

I do not know where it was, or when it was, but sometime, long, long ago, there lived a Czar, who was very selfish and very proud, and so silly in his selfishness and pride that he would take advice from no one, but just went on doing as he pleased. If he saw anything he wanted, he took it from the poorest as well as from the richest of his subjects; if he wished to do anything, he did it, no matter how much it troubled or hurt any one else; and he never dreamed there could be any trouble or loss resulting to him. And no one dared to contradict him or advise him or warn him. Yes; there was one man who dared, and only one.

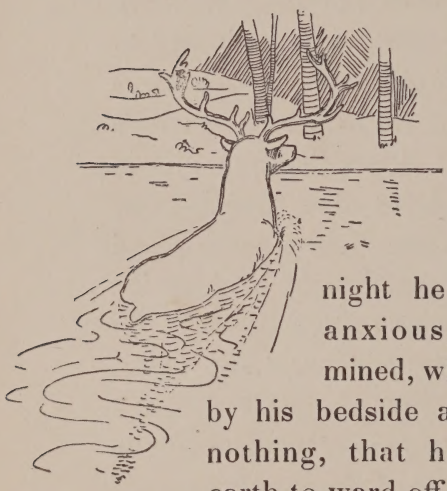
For on a certain Easter, the Czar went

to church. He went only once a year, on Easter; and he had forgotten just what they did and said in churches. But that day, in a moment when he happened not to be thinking of himself, of what he was going to do and to have, and listened to what the priest was reading from the Bible, he heard some words about selfish kings and rulers that put him in a rage; and he nursed his rage, which grew hotter and hotter all through the service and all the way home. When he got back to his house, he called the priest to him.

"What do you mean," shouted the Czar, "by reading such words before me?" "They are written in the Holy Book," answered the priest, "and I must read what is written." "Read what is written, blockhead? Well then, they shall be written no longer. Blot them out with black grease, so that no one shall ever read them in my church again." "If I had written them I would blot them out, but they are the message of God. In all things else I will obey you, but I dare not offend God."

"I will teach you that it is worse to offend me than to offend God. Blot them out within

three days, — so long I give you to change your mind. If, at the end of that time, what I say is not done, off goes your head!"



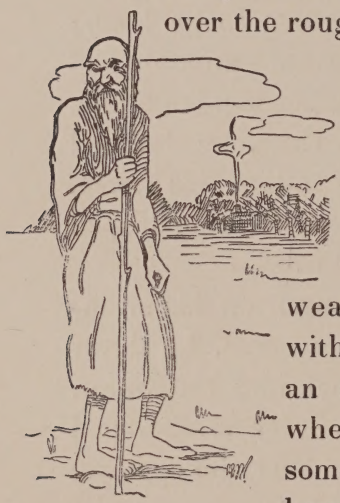
Well, the poor priest was not afraid to die; but he couldn't help worrying about what would become of his wife and children; and the third night he lay awake, sad and anxious, but no less determined, when an angel appeared by his bedside and told him to fear nothing, that he had been sent to earth to ward off this trouble from him.

So the good priest fell into a refreshing sleep, and woke in the morning ready to go before the Czar without a fear. The Czar, however, had waked even earlier. He had forgotten all about the priest, and was thinking only of how he should have a good time that day. Looking out of the window at the bright sunshine, he began to call at the top of his lungs for his huntsmen. And when they had all been roused and gathered, he

rode off with them into the woods. They had gone only a little way when a fine stag jumped out of the bushes, and the Czar started in pursuit, all the huntsmen falling respectfully behind. The stag seemed to be lame; for every now and then he would stumble and the Czar could almost lay his hands on him. By and by they came to a river. "Get up! get up!" cried the Czar, lashing his horse. "Now we have him!" But the stag leaped into the river and began to swim.

Now the Czar prided himself on his swimming. So jumping from his horse, he threw off his clothes and plunged into the water. He gained on the stag at every stroke, and as the poor animal was climbing the opposite bank, the Czar reached out to seize him by the leg; but he grasped only a bush; the stag had vanished — or rather the angel who had taken the shape of a stag; and the Czar, looking back to the other side of the river, saw some one — a bold thief, he thought — putting on his clothes, and then mounting his horse ride away — the angel again, who, assuming the likeness of the Czar, rode back to join the huntsmen.

The Czar, naked and shivering, looked helplessly around him; and at last far off on the horizon he saw a column of smoke rising. It was a weary walk through the brambles and over the rough ground. His feet were bruised and his body scratched and bleeding when he reached the place and found it to be a brick-kiln. The brick-makers, seeing him so bruised and weary, did not trouble him with questions, but gave him an old cloak to wear, and when he begged them for something to eat and drink, brought him some water and black bread and a pickle. It tasted better than anything he had eaten for years.



Only when his hunger was satisfied did they ask him who he was, and how he came to be in his present plight. "No wonder you have never seen me before in this out-of-the-way place," said the Czar. "Well, I am your Czar. Some of you show me the way to my capital, and I will pay you handsomely."

"You miserable rapscallion," said one of the brick-makers, "do you dare to poke fun at us, when we have treated you decently?" and they all shouted derisively. "Laugh at me again," said the Czar, "and I will have every one of you beaten with the knout." This was more than they could stand; and they fell on him and beat him, and drove him off, yelling with pain, into the forest. All through another day he journeyed, and at evening he saw a column of smoke, and hoping that this might mark one of his own palaces, or hunting pavilions in the woods, or at least the house of some noble that knew him, he hurried on. But it was only another brick-kiln. Here too he was treated kindly; and though they were very poor, the brick-makers gave him what they had, — a pair of old stockings and a ragged shirt. But again, when they laughed at his story, he grew angry and threatened them. Then they too drove him away, and he wandered on through the woods until he came to a third brick-kiln. By this time he had learned to hold his tongue and curb his temper, — a great lesson for him. And when these people too pitied him, and fed him, and

gave him a pair of boots, he said nothing about his being the Czar, but only asked them if they could tell him the way to the capital. They guided him out of the forest to the great highroad and set him on his journey; a long journey they told him it would be, and so he found it — even hotter and harder travelling than in the forest. At night he came to a village, and there the guard stopped him. "Halt!" said the sentry on duty, "Who goes there? Show your passport!" But the Czar had none to show; so they hustled him into jail as a dangerous tramp.

The examining officers visited the jail the next morning and asked him where he lived, and he named the capital city. Then, according to custom, he was handcuffed and sent there under guard. And no sooner did he get there than he was thrust into another prison.

Here too the court officers examined him, and to them he told his whole story. "I used to be Czar," he said piteously.

"He is a harmless lunatic," said the judge. "Why should we keep him here at the public expense? Let the poor fool go."

So he wandered about the city. He would have been glad to work and earn his living, but he had never learned how; he wished he had, when begging from door to door he could hardly keep from starving.

Now of course all this time the angel was reigning in the place of the Czar. He had gone home after the hunt, and when the priest came to him and said that he would willingly die rather than hold back a single word of the message of God, the angel Czar said, "I was only trying you. Now that I have found one priest who will stand by his faith without fear or favor, I will make him the bishop of my church, over all other bishops." So the priest went away, in wondering gratitude.

This was only the beginning of change everywhere. Instead of hunting and feasting, the angel Czar gave himself to studying the needs and meeting the wants of his people; all injustice and cruelty were rebuked; and the love of the people toward their ruler was as great as their fear and hatred had been before.

After three years of this happy reign, it was announced to the people that the Czar would

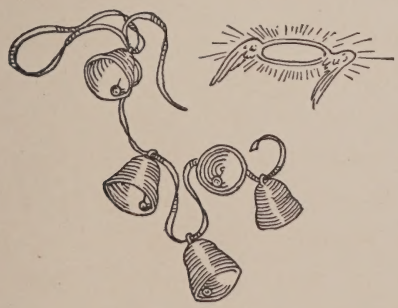
provide a great feast on Easter at the capital for all his subjects, and they were summoned from all over the realm. On the appointed day thousands came together, and with them the real Czar in his beggar's clothes. The angel took care himself to serve the seeming beggar, and gave him a double portion of meat and drink. After the feast was over, as the people went out of the courtyard where the tables had been set, the Czar stood at the gate and gave to each a piece of money, but to the beggar Czar he gave three pieces.

After another three years there was another feast, and the same thing happened again. But the beggar Czar had long since stopped protesting, and took his punishment like a man. He saw that the people were being ruled better than he could rule them, and he had learned to think a little of others.

At the end of still another three years, when the beggar Czar was passing through the gate at the end of the accustomed feast, the angel stopped him, and taking him with him into an inner chamber of the palace, "See," he said, "the pride and cruelty have faded out of your heart under the chastening

of these years. Now you shall be Czar again, and shall exercise in high places the justice and mercy you have learned among those of low degree."

Then he told him to wash and shave, and dressing himself in the royal garments, go back to his courtiers who were feasting below. The Czar turned to tell the angel how grateful he was even for the very hardest experience of his long trial, for through it a new manhood had been born in his soul. But there was no angel to be seen, only the royal garments he had worn, lying on the floor. And through the window came the triumphant sound of Easter bells.



HOMELAND AND FAIRYLAND

FRENCH

HOMELAND AND FAIRYLAND

THERE was an old saying about there being no word for "home" in the French language, and the saying was made current by those who supposed that the French were not a home-loving people. There never was a greater mistake. As you journey from province to province, through one sunny little town after another, across great stretches of rich farming country, along the coast, with the fishermen's cottages clustering at the foot of cliffs, what you remember best of all, more than the great châteaux, more than the splendid cathedrals, are the homes.

When the old people die, the property is parcelled out among all the children. So the land is divided up into numberless little strips, each belonging to a separate owner; and each strip is cultivated lovingly, — a little patch of flowers, a little vegetable garden, a bit of pasture land; so that sometimes a hillside seen from a distance looks like a vast patchwork quilt spread out in the sun. On every

little farm is a little house; and if you should enter the house, you would know at once it was a home that had been loved by those who lived there. Indeed, if you should go back to the same house after many years, you would find that the love of those who lived there had kept everything just the same as when you saw it before, — the same curtains, and carpets, and little ornaments on the mantelpiece. So you would feel at home at once.

A Frenchman is the most homesick of mortals. He cannot bear to stay away from home any length of time. He very rarely becomes a citizen of another country. He would not exchange his home for all the wealth on earth, and he believes that to be deprived of home is the greatest misfortune. That is the true Frenchman, that is the heart of France, which will not be revealed to you in traveller's tales, or in the gossip of courts and kings, but in the stories that the people have loved to tell among themselves for many generations, — the peasants and fishermen, — just such a story as I am going to tell you about "P'tit Colinet."

Long, long ago, when fairies were very often seen in the land, and sometimes even had friendly talks with mortals, a dear old woman named Lizabeau, who lived at Moulin du Roi, was waked up one night, just as she was falling asleep, by a tremendous knocking at the door, and a man's voice that called out to her to get up as quickly as she could, because she was needed at once. Now Lizabeau was a widow who very often took care of her neighbors when they were sick, and was used to being called for just in this way, so she was neither surprised nor frightened, but dressed herself and opened the door. The man who was waiting for her was very, very small; she had never before seen such a tiny man. He was all wrapped up in a cloak, and when she held up her candle to get a better look at him, he turned his face away, and said she was wanted to take care of a sick child. Well, the old lady had never seen the little man before, and at first she didn't know whether to go with him or not. But he

started away at a quick pace, as if the matter was decided, and she followed him.

She saw that he was taking her along the shore of Vazon Bay. This seemed strange, because there were only fishermen's cottages in that neighborhood, and her companion, small as he was, was dressed like a gentleman. She waited until they came out opposite the town of St. Georges, and then, following him a few steps more, she said, "You have taken the wrong road, sir. This road runs down to the sea." "No!" said he, "I am on the right road. Follow me."

They went on together, and soon they were on the seashore. Then Lizabeau spoke again. "There is no house here, sir; surely you have lost your way. If you will only tell me where you live—" She stopped, afraid she had said too much; but he answered in a deep, sweet voice, "You will see it very soon, my good woman. Follow me."

They started on again, and crossing the beach, came to the cliffs near Houmet's Tower. It was very dark in the shadow of the cliffs, and she could hardly tell where to step with safety. She stopped and said, "I

cannot go any further. We shall both fall into the sea." "Give me your hand," said the queer little man. She obeyed; and his hand was as small and as soft as a child's. He led her on so gently and so skilfully that she soon got over being afraid, but, just the same, she could not help wondering where on earth they could be going.

They turned into a cave, where she could not see a foot before her face. They walked on a long time in deep darkness, until suddenly the little man told her to stop, and asked her if she did not see anything. Lizabeau never would tell a soul what she did see. But the next day she had in her arms a little child, very frail looking, and for all questions about it she had only one answer, — "A gentleman left the child with me."

The neighbors gossiped a great deal, and puzzled their heads to guess where the child came from. But by and by they stopped talking; and when little Colin was seven years old, every one had forgotten that he was not Lizabeau's own child. He was a very handsome boy, but so small that many of the peasant children who were only three

years old were as big as he was, and a great deal stronger. Besides, he was n't at all like other children. He never played with them. He did not go to school. All day he wandered along the sea-shore, and brought home sometimes a fish, sometimes shells and seaweed; and often he told his "Mother Lizabeau," as he called her, about a strange man, dressed in green, who watched him while he played all by himself, and who sometimes also appeared to him in his dreams. Lizabeau did not like to hear him talk on this subject, and told him to be quiet. So Colin at once stopped speaking about the man; for he loved his foster-mother, and he saw that the subject was unpleasant to her.

When Colin was about fifteen years old, the parish priest scolded Lizabeau because she had not sent the boy to school, and had allowed him to grow up in idleness. Lizabeau

did not know what to say, for she did not want to confess that her foster-son was wild of heart, like a timid wild animal that could not be tamed to the ordinary ways of men. But Colin, looking straight into the kindly face of the priest, who asked him if he did not want to come with him and go to work, said he would go willingly.

He had lived hardly a year with his new friend, behaving as wisely and as quietly as he could, when one night his master happened to be kept very late in the parish of St. Sauveur, and as he was walking at the foot of a great bowlder called "La Rocque-ou-le-Coq-chante" he heard a voice calling, "Jean de Marecq! Jean de Marecq! Now tell little Colin that big Colin is dead."

The priest was much surprised and frightened. When he got home he called the boy and said, "Colin, to-night I heard a voice that said to me, 'Now tell little Colin that big Colin is dead.'" "Ah!" said the boy, "then good-by, master, I must leave you." "Leave me! and go where?" asked the master. "I cannot tell you," said Colin. "Good-by. Do not keep me from going."

"Well, go then," said the priest. "But I will pay you wages for your work. Wait till I count out the money." The boy began to laugh. "Don't trouble yourself on that score," said he. "Where I am going, I shall need neither gold nor silver." And hurrying out of the door, he disappeared in the darkness of the night, leaving the priest sore perplexed and troubled.

The same night, Lizabeau woke and saw her foster-son standing beside the bed, crying as if his heart would break. "Colinet," said she anxiously, "why are you here, and what is the trouble?" "Ah!" said he, "I have got to go far, far away, and I shall never see my earthly mother again; and I know that in the country where I am going neither gold nor silver can give me a love like yours. Give me your blessing, dear mother, for we must part."

Then so quickly that she had no time to think what answer to make, he vanished, and she never saw him again. Lizabeau thought she might have dreamed it all. But as soon as it was morning, she hurried to the priest's house and asked for her son.

He was not there, and he never came back.

This is only one of many stories which the French peasants tell their children to show how thankful we ought to be; for we have only to shut our eyes — and sometimes not even that — to dream our way into fairyland, where there are splendid palaces and treasures untold. But always when we wake we find ourselves in our own dear homes, among our friends; while the poor fairies, although very, very rarely, some of them may stay for a little while in one of our homes, must go back to fairyland and live in their shining palaces and great gardens, when they would willingly give them all up just to be real boys and girls in a real home, — even a poor fisherman's cottage, — with a real country of their own, a real father and mother, and real playmates and workmates.

THE BLACK HORSES OF CANOBIE LEA

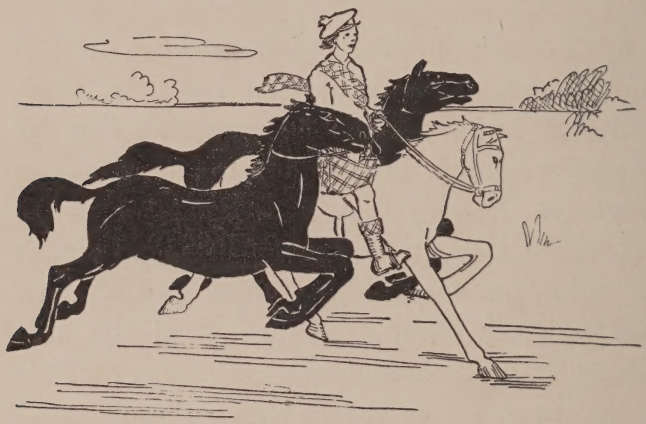
SCOTCH

THE BLACK HORSES OF CANOBIE LEA

A TALE of Scotland must be a tale of the moors. Who that has seen them will ever forget them, — leagues and leagues of purple heather lifting away up the mountain slopes to the very foot of the craggy peaks; purple heather, and here and there a dash of yellow broom, with sunshine and shadow chasing each other over them, and the mist folding in on them and breaking away? Fair to see they are in the daytime, these moors, but a bit lonely and uncanny at night. The wildest tales of the Scotch border are associated with these same moors. There is a stretch of them known as Canobie Lea in the old ballads, and I suppose it was because this was the scene of most of his exploits that a certain roystering borderer got his name of Canobie Dick. I suspect he was the same Dick that is celebrated in the old Scotch ballad preserved in Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads;" for there also

Canobie Lea is mentioned, and the point of the ballad has to do with horses.

As to Thomas of Ercildoun, otherwise known as Tom the Rhymer, the mysterious



prophet of Scottish history, the keeper of the vast caverns beneath the Eildon hills, who also appears in the following tale, he is a favorite character in the song and story of Scotland from the very beginning on to the days of Burns and Scott.

It was of a moonlight night that Canobie Dick was riding home across Bowden moor in the shadow of the Eildon hills, with a couple of black horses that he had not succeeded in selling, when out from a wayside

thicket into the middle of the bridle-path stepped a man, very old, if his quavering voice and his bent form were any signs of age. Morever, his dress was of an antique style long since gone by in those parts.

Civilly enough, he asked if the horses were for sale, and, although Dickon named a good round price, the stranger at once poured plenty of gold-pieces from a pouch at his side, and held them out for Dick to pick the amount. Perhaps Dick ought to have been a bit suspicious, for when he came to look at them, the pieces were of very old coinage, — unicorns, bonnet-pieces, and such like. But it was good gold, just the same, and Dick would have sold a horse to the Old Nick himself, and got the best of the bargain.

At the request of the stranger Dick agreed whenever a black horse came into his hands to hold it, and on a certain night of each month to bring any black horses he had to this same lonely spot on the moors, and sell them to the stranger. They always met by moonlight.

Now after a while Dick began to get curious. He really wanted to know who the stranger was, and what he was doing with all those

horses. So he began to make broad hints, and one night, jingling the gold pieces in his hand, he said to the stranger, "The pay is generous enough, but the old proverb says dry bargains are unlucky. Perhaps you could take me home with you the night and treat me to a half a mutchkin." "You may see where I live," said the queer old man, "if that 's what you want. But once started with me, to lose heart will be as good as to lose life." Dick, who had never been afraid of anything, laughed scornfully, taking example from the old man, dismounted, threw the bridle over his arm, and together they picked their way up the steep mountain-side. When they were in among the great bowlders close under the peak called Lucken Hare, Dick was amazed to see his companion enter the mountain by a cave which he was sure had never been in that spot before, and he had passed it often from his boyhood up, when he had been out hunting among the hills.

The stranger saw Dick hesitate, and looking at him with a grim smile, said, "Go back now, if you want to. Your companion is no other than the famous Thomas of Ercildoun."

But Dick pulled himself together and went in. It was a vast place, this mountain cave, lighted with hundreds of torches. It seemed to be fitted up as a great stable, with long rows of stalls. In each stall was a black horse, and by every horse lay a knight in black armor with a drawn sword in his hand. Both horses and knights were asleep — perhaps dead, or turned to black marble; for not a sound came from them, not a foot or a hoof moved.

They walked the whole length of the cave, and at the upper end came to a broad table of black bog-oak, on which lay a sword and a horn. The old man turned and looked Dick in the eyes once more. "Whoever shall sound the horn and draw the sword," said he, "if he be stout-hearted, may be king of all Britain, provided he do the right thing first, — blow the horn or draw the sword."

Well Dick thought to draw the sword first would be risky, because it might be taken as a defiance by the powers of the place, and he was getting more and more afraid every minute. So he reached for the trumpet and with trembling lips sounded a few faint notes. The result was terrific. A noise like peals of thunder echoed through the cave. Horses and men leaped up, knights vaulted into their saddles, armor clashed, lances were lowered, and with a mighty cry the whole array dashed straight for poor Dick, who now tried to get hold of the sword on the table, but a voice shouted in his ear, —

"Woe to the coward that ever he was born,
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn!"

The next thing Dick knew he was lying out on the mountain at the foot of a great heap of broken stones below the peak, with scarcely enough breath left to tell of his last meeting with Thomas of Ercildoun, for the stranger never came again. And Dick's spirit was broken, and his luck was at an end, for

"Woe to the coward that ever he was born,
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn!"

WHEN THE OLD GODS WAKE

NORWEGIAN

WHEN THE OLD GODS WAKE

WE all know that the names of old Norse gods survive in the names of some of our days of the week, — Woden's day, Thor's day, Freya's day, and the like. In Norway you will find peasants and fishermen who believe that more than the names survive; the gods themselves, banished and imprisoned for most of the year, at certain seasons, for a few brief hours, are permitted to return to earth, and are sometimes seen by favored mortals. And this is true not only of the gods after whom the days of the week are named, but also of the gods of a still older world, gigantic beings whom Odin, Thor, and the rest conquered and drove from power. I do not wonder that such beliefs hold their ground in the land of mighty cliffs and myriad lonely islands, precipitous mountains rising sheer from fathomless seas, — fit dwelling-places for the fierce gods that ruled men's minds when the world was young.

They say there was once a very rich and powerful Norse chieftain who lived near the city of Drontheim. He had an only daughter, Aslog, very beautiful and accomplished; and he had set his heart on marrying her to one of the neighboring chieftains, in order that the two domains might be united. His daughter, however, had fallen in love with a brave and handsome but poor young man in her father's suite, named Orm.

Now the two lovers, seeing how hopeless was any attempt to win the consent of the old chieftain, determined to be married secretly and run away. So after a friendly priest had performed the ceremony, Orm, who, like all Norsemen, was a good sailor, hurried with Aslog to the shore, where he had a stanch boat, well provisioned, hidden at the head of a fjord. Once embarked, they did not dare to come ashore again for many days; for Aslog's father was lord of a long stretch of coast, and when their flight was discovered he would be sure to set watchers on every headland. Day after day they sailed, and at last in despair put out to sea; the coast-line faded away, and they could see nothing

but the blue sky and the restlessly tossing waves.

Aslog was getting very faint and hungry, for the provisions were beginning to run low, when, on the evening of the third day after they had lost sight of Norway, they drew near what seemed to be a large island surrounded by a number of smaller islands. But whenever Orm attempted to land, a great wind rose, now from this quarter, now from that, according to the side of the island he approached, and blew the boat out to sea, as if it were pushed back by an invisible hand. Orm looked at poor Aslog, fainting in the bottom of the boat. "Lord God!" he cried, raising his eyes to heaven. The instant the words were spoken the wind died down, and the waves carried the boat gently ashore.

After they had satisfied their hunger with some mussels which they found on the beach, Orm and Aslog set out to explore the island. There were no trees on it, only low shrubs; and looking over them, they could see no sign of any inhabitant. But at the very centre of the island they found a strangely built house. Only the roof and a very few feet of wall

were above ground; but below ground was a spacious room. In the middle of the room was a fire, and over the fire hung a kettle of fish. At the side of the room were the beds ready made for the night. But no one was in sight. After searching the island over, and scanning the sea far and wide, Orm and Aslog ventured to eat some of the fish, and then lay down to sleep. They felt sure the owners of the house would return in the night, but they feared no harm. No one came, however, and day after day passed until they had been on the island over a year, living very happily together; for they were satisfied with each other's company, and the wild birds' eggs and the fish furnished them with plenty of food.

In the autumn a little son was born to them. The day he was born they were aware of a wonderful presence standing before the doorway of the house; it seemed like a beautiful woman. Her face was as fair as the sunset in summer skies, her dress was the shimmering green of the sea; and her eyes shone like stars.

"Have no fear," said she. "I am the owner of this house, and I am very grateful

to you for the good care you have taken of it. I should have made myself known to you sooner, but I was not able to enter the house after you had taken possession until this little heathen," smiling at the infant in the mother's arms, "was born. Do not bring any priest from the mainland to christen it, or I must disappear, never to return. If you will do what I wish, you may live here as long as you please, and you will always have good luck. My name is Gurn, and I am of the family of the old giants who once ruled the whole world. One warning I give you. Never speak, in my presence, the name of him whom no giant can bear to hear of; never make the sign of the cross, or carve it on any part of the house. You may have the house to yourselves all the year, except for one night. On Yule evening, when the sun is at its lowest point, we of the elder world keep our great festival. Then you must go out of the house, and on peril of your lives do not look into this room until after midnight. Or if you cannot go out of the house for the cold, at least you must stay in the loft and make no sound."

With these words the mysterious presence

faded into the air. Orm and Aslog lived on in the little house through the autumn months more happily than ever. Gurn's promise of good luck came true. Orm always found the nets he set full of fish; and whenever he went hunting wild-fowl, he always hit whatever he aimed at.

When Christmas came, they put the house in perfect order, and as soon as it was twilight climbed up into the loft. They had been there only a few minutes when they heard a sound such as the swans make in the winter, — a sound of beating wings in the air. Orm opened up the lid of skin in the roof that covered the hole through which the smoke escaped from the fireplace, and looked toward the sea. The little islands as far as he could see on all sides were sparkling with hundreds of blue lights, which kept shifting and moving, now high, now low, now drawing together, now separating. At last they formed in orderly procession, and moving toward the large island where Orm and Aslog were, formed in a circle about a great rock or crag just off shore, which Orm had often noticed when he had been fishing. What was his amazement to

see this rock, now illuminated by the circle of blue fire, taking on the appearance of a gigantic human figure. And the blue lights he saw were carried by countless trolls, — queer little fellows with owl's eyes and beaks and humped backs.

As he gazed, the circle opened, and Gurn, stepping lightly over the waves as if they had been dry land, advanced to the rock, and threw her arms about it. Whereupon it immediately began to come to life and move with her toward the shore, and all the trolls set up a shout or shriek of joy that sounded like the whistling of the wind.

Orm shut down the lid in the roof and drew closer to Aslog. Although they could see nothing, they knew by the louder shouts that the procession was coming to the house. Then they heard the pattering feet of the trolls and the heavy tread of the giants on the floor of the room below. And soon by the clattering of plates and the clink of tankards they knew that a great feast was in progress. Towards midnight the noise of feasting ceased, and there rose from below the music of that enchanting fairy tune, sometimes heard by lonely

travellers by moonlight in the forest, played by the musicians of the underworld. He who has once heard it never forgets it, and when he hears it again, he forgets all else. With the music came the sound of feet dancing in perfect time.

Aslog could not resist the fascination of the music, and in spite of Orm's remonstrances crept with her child in her arms to a corner of the loft under the eaves, where through a crack she could look down into the room below. "I must look," she said, "or I shall break my heart."

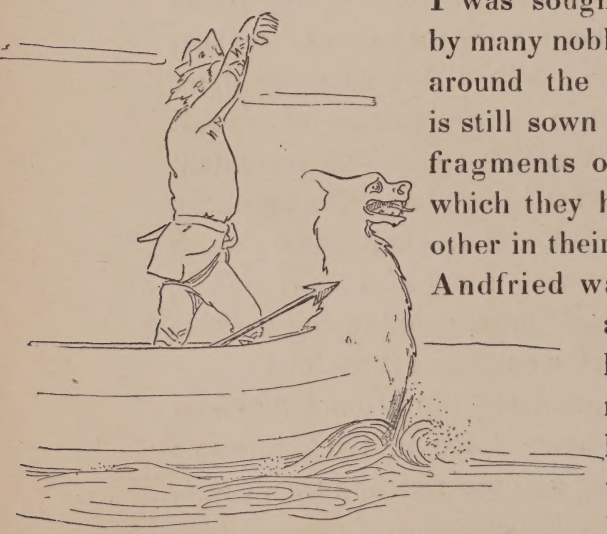
It was a marvellously beautiful and intricate dance, and she could not take her eyes away from it; the music filled her with a strange joy. She was brought back to herself by the weight of her child, who had been lulled to sleep by the music and had fallen back on her arm. Looking down at its half-parted lips, and utterly forgetting her promise to Gurn, she instinctively followed the Norse custom and made the sign of the cross over the mouth of the child, saying, "Christ bless you, my little one!"

Instantly there was a terrible tumult and shrieking; trolls, fairies, and giants swept in

terror out of doors; then the lights faded out, the noise died away, and all was dark, silent, and desolate. Orm and Aslog did not dare to leave their hiding-place until morning. Then Orm, looking out of the hole in the roof, saw the great rock off shore, standing where it always had been, with the waves breaking white at its base. When they ventured down into the room once more, they found the table set with silver vessels of exquisite workmanship. A copper kettle stood near the fireplace, nearly full of mead, and beside it was a golden loving-cup. A many stringed harp stood in the corner. While they were looking at these things, they heard a noise like the faint sobbing of a distant sea, and looking around they saw Gurn standing once more in the doorway; and again, as she saw the fright in their faces, she said: —

"Have no fear, for although you have caused me great sorrow, so that I shall never cease from weeping all the days of my life, yet I know you meant no harm, and I forgive you. I will not hurt you, though such is my strength, I could crush the walls of this house together like the egg of a seagull. But you must

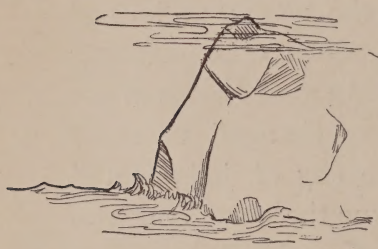
hear what you have done. My beloved husband, dearer to me than life itself, is now turned to stone forever. For three hundred years I lived on the island of Kunnan with my father. The fairest of all the giant maidens, I was sought in marriage by many noble heroes. All around the island the sea is still sown thick with the fragments of great rocks which they hurled at each other in their jealous strife. Andfried was the victor, and I became his wife. But meantime the hateful Odin, with his following of new gods, conquered my father and forced us all to leave our home. What became of my father and sisters I never knew. My husband and I escaped to this island, where we thought to live out our lives in peace. But alas! in a few years Olaf, the mighty king, — him they call Saint Olaf, — came from Britain.



Andfried heard of Olaf long before he arrived, how his ship swept resistlessly through the waves. So Andfried went out on the beach and blew the sea against the ship with all his might. But Olaf's ship still rushed on toward the shore like an arrow shot by a strong bowman. Then Andfried waded out into the sea, and grasping the prow of the ship, was just going to push it under the waves, as he had often sunk ships before, when Olaf, standing on the prow and lifting his crossed arms in the air, cried out, 'Be thou changed to stone and stand there till the day of judgment!' Instantly Andfried became the great crag you see, and the ship swept on unchecked.

"I was left desolate. Only on Christmas night, for a few hours, can the many cliffs and crags that once were giants come back to life, and then only on condition that one of their own kind will embrace them and will give up a hundred years of his own life. Rarely is that last condition fulfilled. But for the love of my husband I have been glad to fulfil it until now. Henceforth even that sacrifice would be in vain. Now he has heard the name which I am afraid to speak, and even

my embrace will not rouse him. He must sleep in stone till the last day. You will never see me again. The house and all that is in it I willingly give to you — all except the harp, which I must keep. Let no one build or live on any of the little islands. They are the dwelling-places of the little people of the underworld whom you saw at the merry-making, and I will be their guardian as long as I have life."



Even as she was speaking the last words, Gurn vanished from sight.

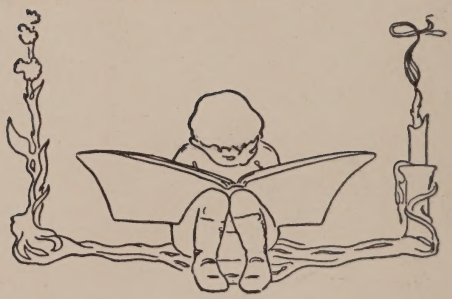
When the spring came, Orm took the gold and silver vessels to Drontheim and sold them at a price that made him a very wealthy man. Aslog's father was glad to forgive and welcome his rich and powerful son-in-law. And so the happiness of Orm and Aslog was assured. They have vanished from earth long ago. But the great crag still towers above the sea just off the shore of the island where they once lived. And sailors say that on Christmas night they have sailed past it, and

the mist streaming out from its head is like the gray locks and beard of a giant, the long white breakers that climb its sides are like white arms that fold about it and fall away, and the sobbing of the sea in its caves is mingled with strange and entrancing music, as of one playing on a dulcimer or harp.

AND SO END

The Tales from Many Lands. The Story-teller hopes you are sorry to be through. But perhaps you would like to read them all over again. In that case the old proverb fails for once, and you can eat your cake and have it too —

"A Consummation devoutly to be Wished."



Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 10090 114 7
B. P. L. Bindery.
APR 15 1913